Ufford PUNCH

ISSUE 339

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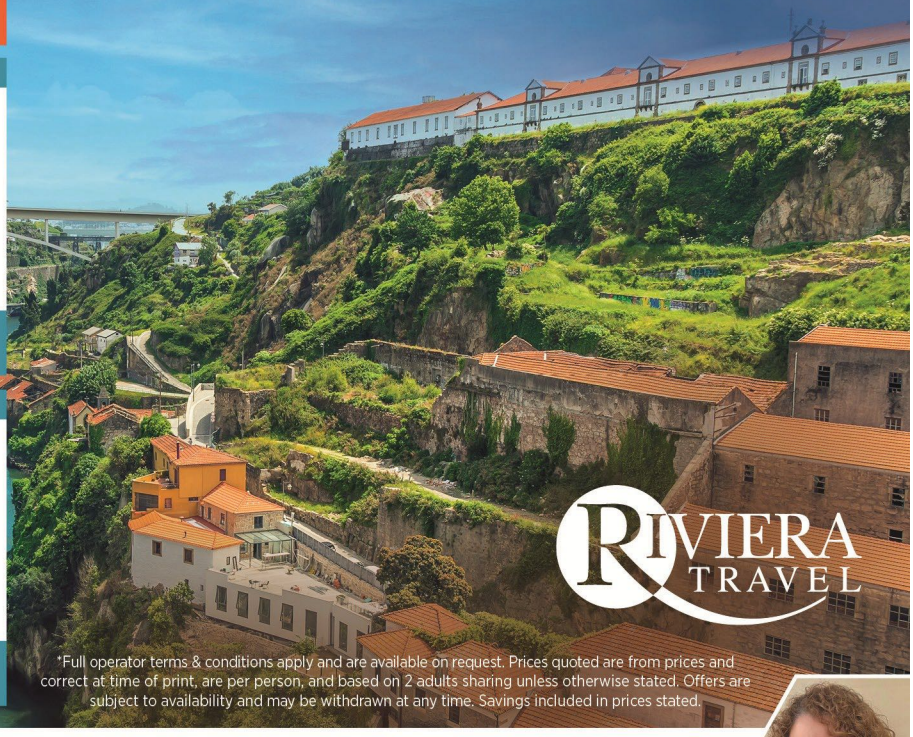

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YOUR SUBMISSIONS:
submissions@uffordpunch.org.uk

EDITORIAL:
Kevin Young, Edward Creswick, Tony Hill, Andy Gardner
editor@uffordpunch.org.uk

PUNCHLine:
Judi Hallett and Tig Thomas
PUNCHline@uffordpunch.org.uk

ADVERTISING:
Sue Wright - 07788 410431
sue.wright1@outlook.com

OUR REPORTERS:
Alex Bennett and Helen Paxton
submissions@uffordpunch.org.uk

CHAIR:
Tony Hill
chair@uffordpunch.org.uk

SECRETARY and ARCHIVIST:
Nicky Scott
secretary@uffordpunch.org.uk

TREASURER:
Jacqueline Davies
jacquelinedavies1@btinternet,com

DISTRIBUTION:
Tim Mumford
distribution@uffordpunch.org.uk

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Cover Artwork by Helen Jones

Welcome to the Ufford PUNCH

From the Editor

Welcome to the April edition of the PUNCH, a month in which we celebrate the clocks going forward on Sunday the 30th March, the summer marquees opening at our two wonderful pubs and the return to life of Ufford's many gardens. Pull on those wellies, service that mower and sow those seeds.

We hope you enjoyed the March issue produced by four of the village's Gen Z. They did a superb job and you will continue to hear their voices in future editions. We welcome contributions from all ages, so please let us know of stories or provide feedback at submissions @uffordpunch.org.uk. The PUNCH has been delighted with a number of recent contributions and we hope to publish at least one in the May edition of the magazine. We are lucky to have a pool of creative people in the village and many help - or are coerced - into giving up their time to put the magazine together on a monthly basis. Believe me when I say that it is a huge endeavour with just a core of three editors and one compiler responsible for many aspects of the finished product. So, if you fancy getting involved and you reckon you might be the next Bob Woodward or Carl Bernstein, please let us know at editor@uffordpunch.org.uk.

This month's magazine has a Boy's Own inspired cover designed by Helen Jones of Lower Road. Helen is a fashion designer by craft, and, in my opinion, used her skills to produce one of the great PUNCH front covers. It celebrates our centre spread, featuring local author Simon Pearson, who writes about appearing on the popular podcast '*For You The War Is Over*' to speak about his best-selling book *Great Escaper*, on the life of Squadron Leader Roger Bushell – aka "Big X" – who masterminded the Great Escape in which 76 Allied airmen broke out of Stalag Luft III in eastern Germany on the night of March 24-25, 1944.

Long term resident Erica McLean, who with husband Rob emigrated to Canada in late February, brings us up-to-date with their new life at a time when the country is being threatened and coerced by President Trump. After 30-years in tranquil Ufford, it must be a shock to land amidst a political firefight. Her son Alex, by contrast, is enjoying sun, sea and sangria on the beaches and in the mountains of Argentina. Both reports shine a light on life outside the village but reflect back on their experiences in Ufford. We've also got dogs writing, dogs giving birth, news about the village's favourite band, a postcard from Vietnam, a progress report on St Mary's Hall and so much more.

And, as we go to press, huge news that has rocked the media empire that is the PUNCH. This is about our succession. Please go to page 26 for the full astonishing report.

Andy Gardner

The May Ufford PUNCH submissions should be sent to submissions@uffordpunch.org.uk by **Friday 11th April**

Have You Heard It on the PUNCHLine?

Get the latest village news first via our digital newsletter '**PUNCHLine**'.
If there is anything you want to broadcast, write your message and send it in Monday - Saturday for circulation to all our subscribers as soon as possible.
To subscribe, or broadcast news, email punchline@uffordpunch.org.uk

UFFORD PUNCH NOTICE BOARD

THE UFFORD DIARY DATES ARE ON PAGE 21

The Ufford Tennis Club invite you to come and give tennis a try at the Recreation Ground Open Court

SATURDAY 12th April

9am & 11am (weather permitting)

Maybe you played years ago and just need a nudge to get you back into playing again. Just make sure you have suitable footwear (trainers), we will provide racket and balls. Come and meet some of our members and try hitting a few balls. If you can't make it on the day, contact Chris Cage at 01394 461082 to arrange a convenient time.

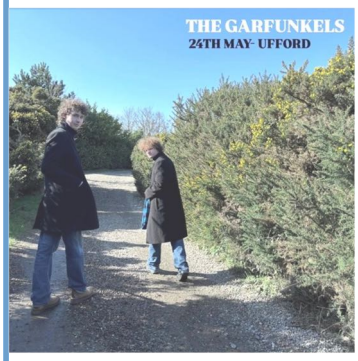
Dennis John Cope

Dennis Cope of The Mill House, East Lane, sadly died peacefully on 25th February 2025, in London, aged 91 years. The well-known Ufford resident was born in Hednesford, Staffordshire on 12th April 1933. Beloved husband of Linda and much loved father of Anthony, Sarah, Laura and Alex. A small family funeral is planned.

Margaret Rose Collier

We sadly learned of the death of Margaret Collier on 16th March 2025, age 88. She and her late husband Alan moved to Ufford in 2003 and lived at The Gables, Ufford Place. The funeral arrangements are being planned.

The Garfunkels Cover the Life and Times of Simon and Garfunkel at St Mary's Hall



Tom Mumford and Angelo Littler

Local artist Tom Mumford and his musical partner Angelo Littler will be showcasing the life, times and songs of legendary duo Simon and Garfunkel at St Mary's Church Hall on Saturday May 24th.

Tom, 20, sold out the Hall when he brought the unique band The Pancakes to Ufford in January - and he is hoping *The Garfunkels* will be able to achieve the same level of success.

Tom told the PUNCH: 'I really enjoyed putting on The Pancakes, but it is even more exciting to be performing in my home village. Hopefully, we can pack out the hall again.'

The Garfunkels promise 'an evening of vocal harmonies, classic songs and the story of Simon & Garfunkel through the years.' They will be supported by local act Painting The Silence who will be singing popular covers.

Tickets cost £10 and can be bought on Eventbrite by searching for *The Garfunkels*. Doors will open at 7pm and there will be a pop-up bar available selling a variety of drinks.

Oooh Aaah Events

A year ago, Giles Shenton received a standing ovation at St Mary's Church Hall after his triumphant one-man show, *Old Herbaceous.*

Following the success of the play, Oooh Aaah Events are pleased to announce that Giles is coming back to Ufford in May.

This time Giles will delight us with his version of the classic *Three Men in a Boat*, by Jerome K Jerome.

The one-man show will see Giles play all three characters on the hilarious Thames boating holiday.

The show will be on Saturday the 31st May. Ticket details to follow. More information soon on PUNCHLine.

Have you looked at the adverts in this issue?

This PUNCH was delivered to your door free of charge only because of the forty advertisers in this issue. If you don't tell them ***'I saw your advert in the PUNCH'***, they may not renew their advert, we may not find a new advertiser, and 'POOF', there goes the PUNCH and all our hard volunteer work. Please do your bit to help us keep the prize-winning PUNCH going, free, alive and kicking. Thanks from the PUNCH Committee!

Ufford Parish Council News

Annual Parish Meeting

The Ufford Annual Parish Meeting will be held on **Wednesday 16th April 2025**, at the Community Hall on the Recreation Ground starting at 7.00pm.

We will have updates from our County and District Councillors, our Parish Council (including an update on how the Neighbourhood Plan is proceeding), and news from our Tree and Footpaths Wardens, the Woodlands Group and the PUNCH Team. To round off the evening we will be serving light refreshments.

Remember, this is not a Parish Council meeting but YOUR meeting – we look forward to seeing you there.

Ufford Litter Pick

The Annual Litter Pick in Ufford took place on 7th and 8th March. Nine willing volunteers collected over 14 sacks of rubbish! The largest volume was collected from the A12 Slip Road (whilst it was shut), but volunteers also picked along Yarmouth Road, Loudham Lane, Parklands and High Street. The haul included over 100 empty cans of beer/cider, over 50 glass bottles and an in date debit card!

A massive 'THANK YOU' to all who turned up on the day, those who picked during the week before and all the Ufford Wombles who litter pick regularly.

Refurbishment of Community Hall Toilets

COMMUNITY FUND

Have you visited the Community Hall recently? If you have you will have seen the splendid new toilets. This project was funded as a joint venture between the Parish Council, the Community Hall Charity and with support from the Lottery Community Fund.
Well done to all. 😊

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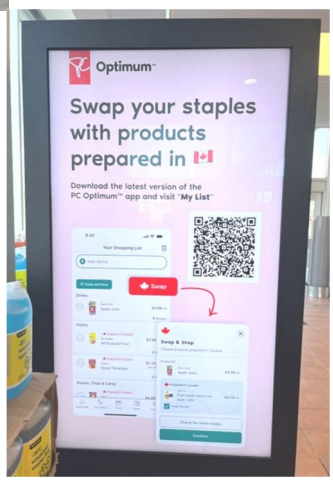
Letter from ~~America~~ Canada

Erica McLean and husband Rob emigrated from Ufford to Nova Scotia, Canada in February. It's been quite a strange few weeks. She writes:

When we landed on 24th February at Halifax International Airport on Air Canada flight AC869 we arrived in a country facing an 'existential threat' from its long-term neighbour, ally and trading partner, a situation neither we, nor the world, could have imagined only a few weeks ago. If Donald Trump expected that Canada would bow down before his jibes, threats and on-off tariffs he miscalculated: Canadians, united as never before in their shock, anger, disgust - and concern, are defiant. And, with new Liberal leader Mark Carney and combative provincial Premier Doug Ford, now household names, they are making their voices heard.

Met by our son Ian, we stop to buy groceries on the way home. As in the UK, food prices are a real cause for concern here, yet Canadians are choosing patriotism over price. In-store signage and maple leaf stickers urge shoppers to 'Buy

Canadian'; shelves in liquor stores are bare of American beer, wine and spirits. We discover an app to help shoppers switch to a Canadian alternative and peer at unfamiliar brands to follow suit.



Home is a cosy, freshly painted 3-bedroom apartment, the upper unit of a duplex owned by Ian and Estelle in a quiet suburb a 45-minute bus ride from downtown Halifax. We arrive after heavy snow, temperatures well below zero. Two weeks later it is milder, the snow has gone from gardens and paths, but light snow showers at night continue to cover the frozen lake in a soft white blanket.

We are immigrants, we need to integrate. We head downtown and across the harbour by ferry to Service Canada for a Social Insurance Number, we open accounts at the Bank of Montreal, and locate Access Canada for temporary Nova Scotia driving licences, surrendering our UK driving licences in the process. We go to Bell Aliant and set up a mobile phone plan. We meet with courtesy and friendliness wherever we go. We return home pleased with our progress and agree that Canadian customer service is truly excellent. After two return visits to the bank (online banking gremlins) and four to Bel Aliant (systematic problems), we doubly appreciate the staff for their patience and persistence on our behalf, and marvel at the streamlined operational efficiency of UK banks and mobile phone providers.

Rob, Erica and Ian

Life settles down. We hire a car, we explore neighbourhoods with a view to a house purchase, we locate our personal mailbox - a five-minute walk away. We apply for a medical insurance card and join the three year waiting list for a family doctor. We shop with confidence, then worry about 'maple-washing' - the devious promotion of selected brands with a vague Canadian connection. We follow the news updates on the BBC and Canadian broadcaster CBC. We hear of coffee shops renaming Americanos as 'Canadianos' and are cheered by Canadian brewer Moosehead's 'Presidential Pack' of 1,461 cans of beer –'just enough Canadian lagers to get through a full presidential term'.

No signs of spring here yet but at a latitude comparable to Bordeaux the sun is high in a blue sky and the air dry. Best of all we have news that our boat has come in! The container is ready to be unloaded at the Port of Halifax: furniture and home comforts. For better or worse, we are here to stay.

Erica McLean

Letter from Argentina

Alex McLean, 33, jetted to Argentina when his parents began a new life in Canada. He brings us up-to-date with his adventures. Alex writes:

We were all sad to leave Ufford, and feeling pretty drained after weeks of selling, sorting, packing and preparing.

I left for Buenos Aires. With a free upgrade, I could finally relax (and sleep). A new chapter begins. And so far, Argentina is treating me very well. I'm staying with my girlfriend in the North of the country. Here it's summer, and I'm enjoying great food, beer, wine and hiking in beautiful landscapes.

February was carnival season, and I was talked into joining the 'Amaluna' group. Before I knew it, I was dressed up in feathers and dancing through the streets of San Pedro, two weekends in a row. At one point, somebody tried to interview me for national TV, but I was dancing too much and didn't notice. Oh well. My story is exclusive to the PUNCH! Next week I'll be back in Buenos Aires for Lollapalooza festival, then Rio de Janeiro for some beaches and islands.

But it's not all play, I'm working hard to build **PotionPort** - an AI powered app and website to help and inspire people to mix delicious cocktails from all the forgotten bottles that seem to accumulate in our houses. It's a fun project. When it's finished, I'll put an advert in the PUNCH!

Alex McLean

Anyone for the Chelsea Flower Show?

At February's meeting The Ufford Gardening Club was relieved, when local garden design expert, and well known garden writer, Lucy Summers agreed, at the last moment, to come and give a talk to us on the subject of 'The Chelsea Flower Show' as the scheduled speaker was sadly indisposed.

Lucy, herself a Gold Medal Chelsea landscaper, is perhaps best known for her *Green Fingers Guides* series of gardening books and writes regularly for a range of popular gardening magazines, as well as designing many private gardens.

She took us through an illustrated, potted history of the famous yearly event from its origins as the Chiswick Fete two hundred years ago and through its various venues - the gardens of the South Kensington Museum in the 1860s and The Inner Temple Gardens on the Embankment - to its present resting place, the sixty-six acres of The Royal Hospital Chelsea, where it has resided since 1913.

Nowadays it has become a huge logistical problem to stage, partly due to the very changeable weather Britain usually experiences in May when it has traditionally always been held. Each show takes at least fifteen months to prepare and twenty-five days to build and reaches twelve million people worldwide through the media. About one hundred and sixty thousand visitors pass through the biggest tent in the world at twelve thousand square feet.

Interestingly 77% of the visitors are female. Some eight thousand people work on the show with many having to suffer the dreaded 'Chelsea Cough' after having been subjected to a pollen overload and the effects of all the dust from stone cutting while setting up.

Styles of gardens have changed over the years with the more formal arrays, and the ever popular rock gardens, replaced more recently by freer, much more sustainable and environmentally friendly presentations.

Gnomes were actually formally banned until 2013 when The Royal Horticultural Society temporarily lifted its veto to allow one hundred and fifty of these engaging (or for some, enraging) fellows to be assembled to greet the Queen. These were eventually painted by celebrities and auctioned for charity.

Ros Conway

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Spring at the White Lion

Reminder of Annual Car Rally and Big Band
Saturday 5th April Cars arriving from 10am Band and The Andrews Sisters Tribute in Marquee from 11:30, BBQ Food

Quiz Night - Tuesday 8th April Meal 7pm , Quiz 8pm
Kit's Alternative Quiz - Wednesday 16th April 7pm
Quiz Night - Tuesday 22nd April Meal 7pm, Quiz 8pm
Open Mic Night- Thursday 24th April 7pm

Join us over Easter - We will be providing a menu with a good selection of fish dishes. Easter egg hunt for all the family on Sunday 20th April starting at 11.30am
Please book early. Sunday lunch served from 12am

Opening Times for April: Closed all day Monday Tuesday - Saturday 11am to 10:00pm
Food 11am to 3pm, 6pm to 9pm Sunday - 12noon to 9:30pm Food 12noon to 6pm

For additional information or to book a table or an event contact
Andy on 07538 600986 or 01394 460770 info@uffordwhitelion.co.uk
stephen_thurlow@hotmail.com Please reserve a table to avoid disappointment 01394 460770
Please check our website for details of our events: www.uffordwhitelion.co.uk

Vintage Nostalgia Fest at the White Lion with Classic Cars, a Big Band and the Spallettes

This year's first Ufford Car Rally is guaranteed to get the feet tapping with the Stardust Big Band making an appearance at the White Lion.

The band will be supported by the Spallettes - featuring sisters Helen, Amy and Katy Spall - who all grew up in Woodbridge. The trio are renowned for their harmonies, especially covering classic songs by the Andrews Sisters. Many of you will know and have spoken to Katy, who is the partner of pub landlord Andy Jarrett.

Helen, Amy and Katy Spall

The event on Saturday 5th April kicks off the summer season at the pub. Andy said: 'The band and the Spallettes will be playing in the marquee from 11.30am in the morning. The car rally is always popular but this year we are adding some music for all the family. We hope everyone will come along.'

Lulu and the 1926 Rolls Royce 20

Now in its 21st year, the get-together of car, motorcycle and van enthusiasts attracts up to 150 vehicles from across the UK and Europe over the day. The event was started by Ufford residents Malcolm Sneath and Foppe d'Hane in 2004 to support the White Lion. Regular volunteers include Chris Norman and Andrew Tayler.

Some last minute care for a 1926 Talbot 105

Foppe, 61, who rebuilds vintage cars in the village, hopes to have at least five of his classic vehicles at the event. These should be: a 1935 Talbot Airline, two Talbot 105s, dating from as early as 1926, and a 1933 Frazer Nash.

Foppe's signature gleaming yellow-bodied 1926 Rolls-Royce 20 will no doubt be the star of the show. He has sent over 200 emails to individual and vintage car clubs as part of the preparation for the rally.

A nearby Car Club is expected to bring along their collection of vintage Sunbeam classic cars.

Foppe said: 'Let's keep our fingers crossed for good weather as we've been a bit unlucky the last few years.'

Pub chef Finn Bourne will be offering a BBQ-style menu and local beers such as Woodforde's Wherry will be on sale. Pub owner Stephen Thurlow said: 'I believe that spring has arrived when the first Ufford Car Rally comes around. It would be good to see everybody from the village and further afield come along and enjoy the day.

The car rally opens at 10:30am until 2pm and food will be served from noon. The pub is open all day. The Stardust Big Band play a range of music from early swing to easy listening and modern big band, from the 1920s onwards.

Andy Gardner

Editor's Note: The rally is bi-annual. The second meeting will be held on August Bank Holiday.

Foppe's 1935 Talbot Airline gets some fresh air

Art Exhibition

Melton Old Church
Old Church Road, Melton
19th – 20th April 2025.
10 a.m.– 4 p.m.

See the work of local artists
in an historic church.
Refreshments. Free admission.
Potential exhibitors contact
Keith 07734321259
(Melton Old Church Society)

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Tiny Paws, Big Love – Lola's Little Puppies

We're over the moon to announce that our beloved miniature dachshund, Lola—affectionately known as Sausage—has welcomed two stunning little girls into the world! These dapple-coated beauties arrived looking like tiny leopards, and we've been utterly captivated ever since.

Deciding whether to let Lola have puppies was no easy choice. She's small but mighty, and after much family discussion, we agreed that motherhood is nature's greatest instinct. We wanted her to experience the joy of nurturing, not just being a pet. So, after searching far and wide, we found the perfect match—Spencer, or 'Prince Teddy' to use his Kennel Club title. Also a dapple, he was the ideal dad for our little ones.

Lola has taken to motherhood like a pro, guided purely by instinct—no parenting books or advice needed! She's been utterly devoted, barely leaving their side, even for her usual favourites like steak, chicken, and liver (a first for our food-loving girl!).

Incredibly, the puppies almost doubled in weight overnight on their first night, and with a little extra help in the early days, they're now thriving—gaining around 10% of their body weight each day. Despite their strong little personalities already shining through, we've yet to settle on names for them. Choosing the perfect ones for these special little girls is proving almost as tricky as deciding to have puppies in the first place!

Of course, the big question everyone asks: will we be keeping them? As much as our hearts say yes, practicality says otherwise. So, we're searching for loving local homes where we can still see them grow - and maybe even have the joy of puppy-sitting for holidays!

For now, we're soaking up every precious moment with these tiny miracles, watching them grow, and celebrating the incredible journey of our little Sausage into motherhood.

Julie Murray

Pedals, Pictures and the Perfect Red

There's something special about heading out for a bike ride before the world wakes up. Whilst most people are still under the duvet, I'm out there, pedalling through the quiet Suffolk countryside, feeling like I've stolen a secret part of the day.

By 6:30 am on a weekend, I'm already winning. Win the morning, win the day - right? The roads (when we have to use them) are blissfully empty, the trails are ours alone, and the world looks completely different from the saddle of a bike. Slower. More detailed. More beautiful.

This shot? Felixstowe. I love snapping photos of my bike against the kind of scenery that makes you stop and think *Wow, I actually live here.* Suffolk isn't just home - it's a holiday destination for so many people, and yet, here I am, rolling through it on two wheels, soaking it all in.

And the best part? After a ride like that, there's always a well-earned reward. Usually, it's a good strong cup of tea. And sometimes - it's a glass of red wine. Because honestly, if you've conquered the morning, why not celebrate a little?

So, if you ever fancy seeing Suffolk from a fresh perspective, set that alarm, hop on your bike, and embrace the morning. Trust me, it's worth it.

Lee Murray

It's a Dog's Life..... and maybe a cat's, or even a canary's

Recently the erudite and esteemed editorial committee of this magazine decided it would be a lovely idea to get local residents to write a small celebratory piece about their lifelong animal companions. A regular column was proposed and, after the usual generous refreshments at the Committee meeting, enthusiasm levels were running high.

Artwork by Zena Mumford

Unfortunately, the pet owners of Ufford have not risen to the challenge - they were too busy walking their dogs, trying to find their cats or chasing canaries from tree to tree. So instead, we've turned things around, and asked the dogs of Ufford to write about their owners, and the problems they face with them. This has been much more successful, and a small selection of our correspondence is shown below.

Sir,
I am fifteen, have bad breath, and problems with bladder control. Strangers seem to recoil from me in the street. I snore terribly.
Recently a letter arrived at my house which proposed to put up the cost of my Veterinary Insurance by several hundred pounds per month. My owner gave me a long sideways glance.
Should I be worried?
Yours, Buster

Dear Sir
May I ask your advice on an ethical issue and politely enquire if honesty is always the best policy?
A little while ago, my owner took me for a walk and, as usual, we passed Ufford Church. As he gazed upwards to admire some particularly intricate flintwork in the Tower, I took the opportunity to relieve myself, unnoticed, on the grass.
As we left the churchyard a few minutes later, he came across my 'deposit' for the first time. 'Disgraceful!' he exclaimed, and 'Some People!' He raced home to write a stiff note to the Parish Council on the duties of responsible dog owners and the rise of anti-social behaviour and thoughtlessness in society.
You can, Sir, imagine my dilemma.
Yours,
(name and address withheld)

Dear Sir

Last week, a small piece of paper was blown off the table and landed in my dog bowl. As is usual in these circumstances, I ate it. All was well until later in the day, when my owner suddenly stood up and waved his arms in the air. 'Our numbers have come up', he exclaimed. That evening he went to the White Lion and brought drinks for everyone in the bar. The next day, his relations came round. They stayed all afternoon drinking champagne, hugged him and loudly announced that he had always been their favourite uncle, cousin or brother.

By Monday, however, things had taken a turn for the worse. My owner was frantically turning over the whole house, shouting 'Where the flipping heck is It? How could I have lost It?'

I'm at a loss to explain these strange changes in my master's behaviour. Any guidance would be gratefully received.

Yours, etc

Fido

Dear Sir,
My owner is always patting me and saying 'You're a special boy!' and 'You're one of a kind!'. So often has she said this, that I firmly believe it.
However, on a recent walk around Ufford I met no fewer than six dogs that looked exactly like me.
I was upset. Has my owner become yet another purveyor of 'fake news'?
Yours, in doubt,
A Black Labrador

By Buster, Fido, a Black Lab, and 'name and address withheld', from an original idea by Geoffrey Willans

Shucks..... What's in a Name?

Rockin' all over the world

Ufford's favourite band May Contain Nuts has changed its name to Shuck. Founder Stefan Atkinson explains why after a successful gig at The Smokehouse, Ipswich on Saturday 1st March.

The Beatles, Rolling Stones, The Wurzels… Whatever the name - the music makes sense of it. So why has MCN become Shuck?

May Contain Nuts started life as a joke name. And it's always been a bit of a mouthful. Coined for a one-night-only band on Stefan's 50th birthday, the Nuts played six songs fast and loud. Twice. Then we caught the bug.

Over time the lineup changed, and we learnt to say 'tremolo' without laughing. The song list grew and after a few beers we'd sometimes ask 'Who are we?'. Mostly we agreed we were a few mid-life folk in search of a crisis and went back to the bar.

But we did have a few goes at changing the name. My favourites: Nutloaf and Hot Flush. Nothing stuck.

In the last year we've written some songs of our own to play alongside the covers we like.

And last time the beery question arose 'Who are we?' someone said 'How about Shuck - you know - like Black Shuck'? Hmm, we thought… Suffolky and mystical. And maybe a bit punky.

Stefan with Will, who sang four solo songs

Everyone agreed. So this year we are Shuck. Next year - who knows?

Stefan Atkinson

Life and Times of a Band Groupie

I've always loved music but was never the band-worshipping type. Open the door of my teenage bedroom and the only thing pasted to the walls was some rather insipid Laura Ashley wallpaper. No posters of the Police, Blondie, Fleetwood Mac, T-Rex adorned my walls though I adored their music. You wouldn't have found me fan-girling or screaming in a mosh pit back then. But all that restraint has properly left the building now.

I find myself as groupie-in-chief of local band 'Shuck' (formally 'May Contain Nuts'). Their choice of covers both old and new - and their own original songs - make dancing irresistible. I haven't missed a gig yet. Caution to the wind, the groupie-cliche is complete: Yes, I may as well say it because the cat is likely out of the bag anyway, I'm also sleeping with guitarist and vocalist Stefan (The Kernal) Atkinson. Before you judge, know this, we actually have loads in common: three children, a dog, and a love of sleeping. It was impetuous, fast work I know.

The band formed five years ago. Originally called 'May Contain Nuts', various local and London talent gathered, grew and Stefan is joined by a wealth of attractive talent: Ewan and Ian on guitar and bass, Matthew on drums and Claire on lead vocals.

Neena gets close to the band

They recently changed their name to Shuck - a reference perhaps to Black Shuck the hell-raising hound who stalks Suffolk and Blythburgh Church, intent on corruption.

I like it. The name and the corruption. No more Laura Ashley. Let's dance.

Neena Atkinson

Story of Great Escaper Takes to the Airwaves

The popular podcast '*For You The War Is Over*' broadcast an hour-long interview with Ufford author Simon Pearson last month as part of an in-depth series on the Great Escape. Released on February 14th, the interview focused on the role of Squadron Leader Roger Bushell – aka 'Big X' - who masterminded the Great Escape in which 76 Allied airmen broke out of Stalag Luft III in eastern Germany on the night of March 24-25, 1944.

Simon wrote a biography of Bushell, which was published in 2014 on the 70th anniversary of the escape, and it is still attracting considerable interest.

The podcast, which was launched in 2019, was founded by Dave Robertson, a parliamentary lobbyist fascinated by escape stories who studied MI9, the wartime intelligence agency responsible for aiding Allied prisoners of war, for his PhD. His co-host is Tony Hoskins, an aviation engineer and documentary-maker who is an authority on Colditz.

Simon developed an interest in Bushell after his father, who had served with the RAF during the Second World War, took him to their local cinema to see the Hollywood film *The Great Escape* in 1964. Among his Christmas presents that year was Paul Brickhill's book. His interest became a passion that he nurtured for nearly fifty years.

'Bushell was a great character,' said Simon, who was given exclusive access to Bushell's personal papers and correspondence, which were donated to the Imperial War Museum by Bushell's family. In fact, Simon went on to stay with Bushell's family in South Africa, learning much more about his life from his niece, Lindy Wilson, a documentary-maker.

'He was a genuine war hero. After being shot down over Boulogne during the evacuation from Dunkirk, Bushell staged three escapes from different camps. He tried to wage war against the Nazis in their own backyard and the Great Escape was the culmination of his endeavours.'

Seventy-six prisoners got out of the camp through a sophisticated tunnel known as 'Harry' - more than 350ft long - on the night of March 24-25, 1944. They spread out across Nazi-occupied Europe, but most of the prisoners were caught and fifty were executed, including Bushell.

In the film, which became a Christmas staple on British television throughout the late 1960s and 1970, the role of Bushell was played by Richard Attenborough, who was given the name of Roger Bartlett as Hollywood took some liberties with the truth and didn't tell the whole story.

What the film did get right, however, was its depiction of Bushell as an imposing character. A criminal barrister educated at Wellington College, then Pembroke College, Cambridge, Bushell was the fastest skier in Europe in the early 1930s, joined the Auxiliary Air Force years before the war and led the Spitfires of 92 Squadron in 1940.

Simon at Duxford Airfield doing research

'He was also a great romantic whose life was marked by his relationships with three women, including one with a Czech resistance fighter while he was on the run in Prague in 1941-42,' said Simon. 'It's a fascinating story.'

Simon, who has lived with his wife, Fiona, in High Street, Ufford since the autumn of 2023, wrote Bushell's biography in 2013 after conducting research in South Africa, where Bushell grew up, Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic while he worked as a journalist at *The Times*.

His book, entitled *The Great Escaper: The Life and Death of Roger Bushell; Love, Betrayal, Big X and the Great Escape,* was published by Hodder in 2013 and became a *Sunday Times* top-ten bestseller.

Supported by Fiona, who co-wrote his speeches, Simon spoke at many literary festivals across the country, and featured in a Channel 5 documentary, *The Great Escape, The True Story.* He recently gave a lecture on the subject at the International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln and has been invited to address the annual meeting of the 92 Squadron Association - Bushell's old squadron - at the RAF Club in London in July.

Fiona's Dream Trip to Get Some Tunnel Vision

When Fiona Gorman accepted Simon Pearson's hand in marriage during a snow storm on Pall Mall just before Christmas 1995, she was well aware that the marriage would involve three people. By then she had become all too familiar with the name of Roger Bushell.

'I knew all about him after our first date,' said Fiona. 'Simon had long intended writing a book about Roger and spent much of his free time undertaking research when we both worked on *The Times*.'

Fiona became increasingly involved in the story. After her husband completed the first draft of the book, she edited the manuscript, and helped to prepare him for appearances at more than twenty literary festivals around the country.

After all these years, Simon is now taking Fiona on what can only be described as a kind of pilgrimage next month when they visit the site of Stalag Luft III just outside the small town of Zagan in western Poland, where Bushell organised and led the mass escape.

Fiona contemplating a Great Escape

Today, the former Luftwaffe camp is visited by thousands of people each year. The remains of the prison huts remain in the forest outside the town of Zagan. There is a camp museum and a replica tunnel.

'We're also going to Colditz,' said Fiona. 'It's every girl's dream trip. I just hope we're home by Christmas!'.

Flying a Suffolk Spitfire Like Roger Bushell

Have you ever flown in a Spitfire in a dogfight with its arch rival the ME109 over the British countryside? I am one of the lucky few and it gives you a small insight into the remarkable pilots who faced mortal danger on a daily basis.

Spitfire with Andy and accompanying ME109

The story of Roger Bushell, *The Great Escaper*, by Simon Pearson, paints a vivid picture of air-to-air combat. That image comes alive when you sit in the cockpit, the smell of fresh glycol mingling with vintage leather. Add the roar of the classic Merlin engine and you are transported to another world - of fun and fear.

I flew in the famous Grace Spitfire out of Sywell aerodrome, Northamptonshire, in 2016. Its home airport was once Bentwaters Parks, Rendlesham, near Woodbridge.

The late Carolyn Grace was often seen taking it for a spin across the county's skies.

I rode in the backseat for a newspaper feature alongside a Spanish-built version of the German ME109 fighter.

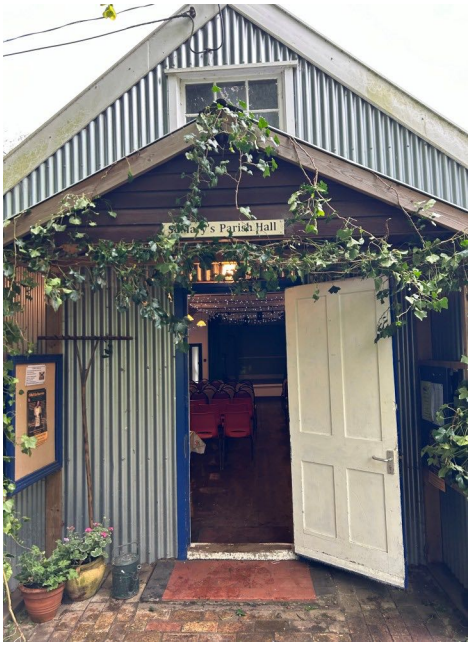
We dived and corkscrewed in a mock dogfight for fifteen-minutes, one of the highlights of my life. There were no bullets screaming across the sky that day. But boy, did it give me a sense of the courage needed by Roger Bushell and his ilk.

Andy Gardner

Andy upside down, as usual

Happy Days are Here Again at St Mary's Church Hall

Karen Eyres, Booking Secretary of St Mary's Church Hall, celebrates the resurgence of one of Ufford's most recognised buildings. She writes:



After years of struggling since the pandemic in 2020, the future looks bright for St Mary's Church Hall, with bookings booming at our iconic venue. The century - old Hall in Church Lane, which had a major renovation in 2015, will host a myriad of events in 2025, from theatre to pop music.

These include more theatrical nights from Ufford's own Oooh Aaah Events, plus new music gigs from village impresario Tom Mumford, 20. Regular activities include art classes, such as life drawing, day-long seminars, and talks hosted by well-known Suffolk figures, including Dr Sam Newton, historian and Anglo-Saxon expert.

And let's not forget the Hall's vital role as a venue for the Ufford Players annual two-night theatre production. The team rehearses on the stage before the big nights.

St Mary's Hall retains much of the charm of mid-20th century Tin Huts as they were called, with a sprung wooden floor perfect for dancing and an original stage. There is increasing demand as a venue for parties for anniversaries and birthdays of all ages - there are even toddler tables.

The hall is a significant part of village life being the host for the Gardening Club plant sale in May and the Summer Show together with acting as a venue for offering teas during the St Elizabeth's Hospice Open Gardens and after concerts in the church. There has also been increased demand for hosting training in nature conservation including the river fly surveys and free bike mending by Dr Bike.

In fact, the actual church does not often use the Hall, although there are some traditional major events, such as Harvest Lunch and the Christmas Fayre. The 2015 renovation included the Hall being insulated and reclad and having a new kitchen and bathroom facilities installed at huge cost.

All the maintenance of the Hall is done by village volunteers and we always need more volunteers especially as the one part of the hall that has not been renewed yet is the inside paintwork. ALL ARE WELCOME!

The Hall hire is £20 per session (am, pm or evening) but £50 for a Friday or Saturday evening which includes set-up. We can supply wine and beer glasses and there is a dishwasher in the kitchen. For bookings, contact Karen Eyres 01394 460455 or 07885377600, or k.eyres@btopenworld.com.

Postcard from Vietnam

Dear Ufford To say Vietnam is otherworldly would be an understatement...it has shown me joy, vibrancy, love and some seriously spectacular views.
I landed in Hanoi just a week ago and already I feel a sense of total bliss as we cruise through the mountains of north Vietnam. The breeze and balmy air creating a vast sense of utter bliss, I have embarked on a journey, The Ha Giang Loop to be specific. My driver is a lovely Vietnamese man named Liam who laughs at every joke and can't stop smiling; neither can I.
The beauty of this country pours out through the sky the mountains and lakes. I am in utter pure joy here and if anyone had the chance I would thoroughly recommend it. I have never felt so excited to explore and travel through such unknown territory. The people here are kind and generous.. sharing food and stories along the trek making the experience all the more special. I cannot wait to see what the rest of south east Asia has to offer as I endeavour to try spinning, banana boats, jewellery making and jet skis ... the world truly does feel like my oyster at the ripe age of 19, I can't wait to see what the rest of my adventure has in store for me.
Love, Nell Atkinson

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Ufford's Neighbourhood Plan..... We're Nearly There

Nigel Smith, Chair of the Ufford Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, brings us up to date on the progress of the document, He writes:

After three years of work and preparation, Ufford's Neighbourhood Plan is in the final stages of examination and we expect EAST Suffolk Council to complete their actions in April.

In 2021 Ufford Parish Council took the decision to look at the benefits of developing a Neighbourhood Plan for the village, which would seek to guide future development. A Steering Group and volunteers prepared the document, which as I write, is going though the final formal consultation with East Suffolk Council (ESC).

Earlier in March, an independent examiner completed his report and gave the NP a clean bill of health.

After ESC have signed off the plan, village residents will have the chance to accept or reject it in a referendum, with a yes / no choice, most likely to happen in June 2025. The voting is counted as a simple majority. If the vote is to accept, then the final procedure will be for ESC to adopt the 'made' plan. However if the plan is not accepted, it is back to the drawing board to start again.

The plan itself gives a number of benefits to the village; we will have formally stated what the village wants the future to be, and that becomes a statutory consultation to the ESC planners.

The plan has an associated design guide that will define how and what future developers must take into account of in order to get approval for planning, and financially it gives a 25% income (up from 15% without a plan) to the village from Community Infrastructure Levy that developers are required to pay as they build dwellings.

NATURE NOTES by Christopher Reading

christopher.reading@icloud.com

The Wren

The wren is not the smallest British bird (that's the goldcrest), but it is the shortest. In the winter they often huddle together for warmth and up to twenty have been observed crammed into a nestbox.
Those of a certain age will remember the farthing, which was the smallest British coin both in size and value, worth a quarter of an old penny, and featured a wren on one side.
The wren is the commonest bird in the UK, with about eleven million breeding pairs. It is easily recognised by its diminutive size and short sticky-up tail. It has a surprisingly loud song, a series of trills of varying length. You are likely to hear a wren before you see it. They eat close to the ground, using their pointed bills to snaffle insects, spiders, seeds, berries and even tadpoles.
In Celtic legend it was regarded as the wisest of birds. This persists in Ireland with a folk tale about a wren outsmarting an eagle to become the king of birds. The Irish word for a wren is dreolin (pronounced like jolene), which means a trickster.

Photo by John Richardson

Nature Knowledge: Some of you will know that Pam and I were hoping to have a couple of rescue hedgehogs in our garden in the spring but sadly that will not now happen. Jemma from Suffolk Prickles was satisfied that our garden is wildlife friendly, but felt that the water meadows beyond, while providing a beautiful view, are too open. She thought the hedgehogs would likely be killed by a predator. It is estimated that the UK hedgehog population has declined by between 15% and 40% over the past decade. You are more likely to see a hedgehog in an urban garden than in a rural village like Ufford. I would be interested to learn if any of you have seen a hedgehog recently.

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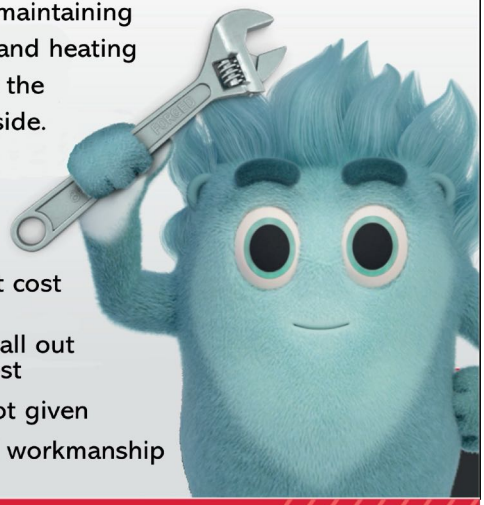

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UFFORD DIARY DATES FOR APRIL

EVENTS

4th - 5th April (Fri - Sat)	The Ufford Players - 'Murder On The Rerun'	SMPH
5th April (Sat)	White Lion Car Rally - Cars arriving from 10.00am	
8th & 22nd April (Tue)	White Lion Quiz Night - Food from 7.00pm, Quiz at 8.00pm	
9th April (Wed)	Ufford Coffee Morning 10.00am to 12.00 noon	UCH
10th April (Thu)	UAHG - Guided Walking Tour of Beccles and Lunch	
14th & 28th April (Mon)	Friends of Parklands Wood - Working Party 9.00am	UCH
15th April (Tue)	Ufford Parish Council - Meeting 7.00pm	SMPH
16th April (Wed)	Ufford Parish Council - Annual Parish Meeting 7.00pm	UCH
16th April (Wed)	Kit's Alternative Quiz at the White Lion	
23rd April (Wed)	Ufford Gardening Club Talk - 'Salvias' 7.30pm	UCH
24th April (Thu)	White Lion Open Mic Night 7.00pm	

CLASSES AND CLUBS

Tai Chi Classes	Mondays at 2.15pm	UCH
Tennis Club	Mondays and Fridays from 5.00pm	UCH
	Open Court Saturday 12th April (9.00am - 11.00am)	
Carpet Bowls	Tuesdays at 2.00pm	UCH
Crocodile Rock	Tuesdays 9.45am - 10.45am and 11.15am - 12.00 noon	UCH
Ufford Bell Ringers	Tuesdays 7.30pm - 9.00pm	
Yoga	Tue 8th, Wed 15th, 23rd, 30th 9.30 - 10.30am and 11.00 - 12.00 noon	UCH
Happy Babies	Thursdays 9.30am -10.30am and 11.00am - 12.00 noon	UCH

BRIDGE CLUBS

Ufford Friendly Bridge Club
Mondays 6.30pm **UCH**

U2 Bridge Club
Wednesday 9th and 23rd April - 1.45pm **UCH**

WHERE?

SMPH **St Mary's Parish Hall**

UCH **Ufford Community Hall**

The PUNCH Directory

Schedule of events and classes are on the diary dates above

Boules (by tennis court - UCH)
Di Fulcher 01394 460551

Bridge Classes
Mike Fisher
www.mikefisherbridge.com

Carpet Bowls
Di Fulcher 01394 460551

Community Hall
bookings.uch@gmail.com

Crocodile Rock
crocodilerock.music@gmail.com

Cycle Club
Stephen Thurlow 01394 460770

Deben Probus Club
John Hickling 01728 746322
johnhickling@uwclub.net

Friends of Parklands Wood
Mike Hawthorne 01394 420241

Happy Babies
hello@happy-babies.co.uk

Helping Ufford Group (HUG)
Hotline: 07595 970139
helpinguffordgroup@gmail.com

Parish Council & website
Clerk: Judi Hallett
01394 411405 / 07739 411927
www.ufford.suffolk.cloud

Parish Church Committee
Karen Eyres 01394 460455
k.eyres@btopenworld.com

PUNCHLine
Tig Thomas 07710 882559
PUNCHline@uffordpunch.org.uk

St Mary's Parish Hall
Karen Eyres 01394 460455
k.eyres@btopenworld.com

Tennis Club
Chris Cage 01394 461082

U2 Bridge Club
Adrian Smith 01394 461179

Ufford Art History Group
Jenny Searle 01394 460317

Ufford Arts Festival
Jeremy Eyres 07739 330398

Ufford Basketball Club
Daniel Metz
uffordbasketball@gmail.com

Ufford Bell Ringers
Kate Eagle 07765 252515
kate.eagle1@gmail.com

Ufford Friendly Bridge Club
Lyn Taylor 01394 460253

Ufford Gardening Club
Sheila Creswick 01394 547658
sheila@creswick.uk
www.uffordgardeningclub.org.uk

Ufford Players Theatre
Jackie Wilks 01423 333167

Ufford Tai-Chi
Ray Norris 01394 383076
www.suffolktaichiacademy.uk

Ufford PUNCH
Nicky Scott 01394 460186
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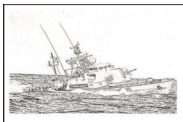

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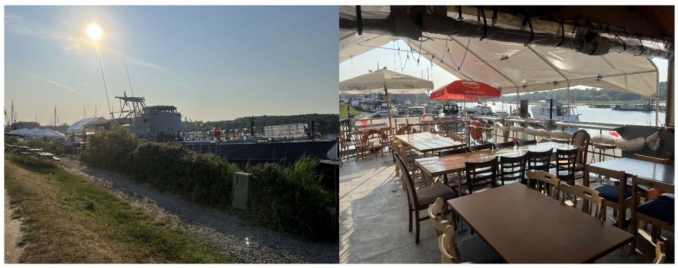

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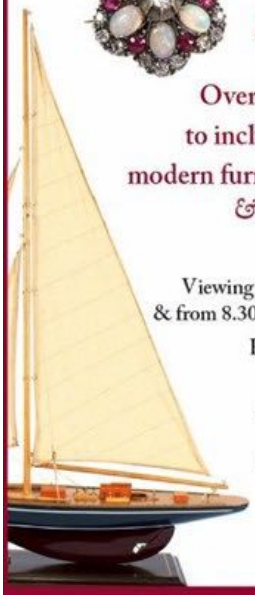

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April in the Garden

Our Advisor this month is the well-known local expert Susannah Sharman from Garden Art / School of Gardening, Swann's Nursery in Eyke **www.gardenartdesign.co.uk**

Spring is the time to tackle those weeds!

Spring has sprung and all the vegetation is growing its fastest at this time of year; this includes everything that you don't want to grow too! The definition of a weed is a plant in the wrong place, so I'll let you decide which plants they are as a lot of people are leaving areas for wildlife these days. Just be warned that plants don't know the boundaries and can spread into areas you don't want them, either by roots or seed germination. So if you're having a 'no-mow May' or a section of garden left alone, expect some trouble in the more ornamental borders, especially in smaller gardens.

Controlling weeds is a continuous job in the garden, so let's see if we can make it easier with these tips:

- Spring is the time to dig up and **remove** any weeds before they get established, flower and set seed. Don't leave weeds till later in the year when they are more noticeable, it's a bigger job and damage done!
- Note: It is **not** a good time to cut weeds such as brambles and nettles back at this time of year as they will grow through stronger, leave till after the spring burst; June onwards or autumn. They must be dug up, roots and all.
- Wildflower seeds are great for the environment but not so great if invasive. Choose wisely and remember all plants are beneficial to the environment in one way or another, even the ones that are not showy. Fill the garden up with a variety of plants to cover all areas of habitat and food for wildlife.
- Cover the soil – if you have problems with low creeping weeds, then plant shrubs that are a level above them. Don't struggle with low level plants that keep getting smothered, get some bulk into the border and group plants for good ground cover. The weeds will struggle and if you have a few you won't be able to see them anyhow!
- Herbicides can be used with care, best time to apply is spring before flowering. The plants will absorb the chemical quickly having more effect than when growth is slower later in the season. Let some leaves grow through to apply, repeat if weeds are persistent, declare war on them and persevere!

You will see the benefits later!

Yoga @ Ufford

Twice-weekly Yoga Classes are starting at the Community Hall in April. For details contact Martin at 07861 665296 or martinaoldfield@gmail.com

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Church Office: St. Andrew's Church, Station Road, Melton, Woodbridge IP12 1PX T: 01394 387491
Church Wardens of Ufford: Karen Eyres T: 01394 460455
David Perfect T: 01394 460363

As we continue on our Lenten journey in a few weeks we will enter Holy Week and Easter. Holy week is a special time in the churches year when we follow the last moments of Jesus' life before he is crucified. We walk with him from the triumphant entrance into Jerusalem on a donkey on Palm Sunday through to his betrayal, arrest, and death. For me the real significance of what Jesus did for us all starts on Maundy Thursday Evening Eucharist, through Good Friday and including the lighting of the new Easter fire and First Eucharist of Easter.

I have often found Lent difficult, because opening up oneself to God with honesty and vulnerability is scary. God knows all of us better that we know ourselves- he made us! Opening ourselves to God is what we should do all of the time, so that we can truly experience his amazing love for each and every one of us. We see this love made visible in the Eucharist which all started at the Passover supper that Jesus shared with his disciples, an ordinary Jewish festival supper celebrated every year to give thanks for their freedom from slavery in Egypt.

Good Friday is the day when Jesus endures the suffering of the world, he experiences pain, humiliation and rejection. Of course, pain and rejection do not win and freedom and liberty does although I am fully aware that for some this is not the case, and that there are far too many crimes of injustice in the world.

What I believe Easter can offer is a way to look beyond pain and injustice, and to see the love revealed to us in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and to celebrate that together as a community. So, when things can seem hopeless and despairing, there is, I believe, hope in the new life of the resurrection of Christ.

Do join us for Holy Week and Easter if you can and experience these wonderful services as, together, we journey with Jesus from darkness to his marvelous resurrection light!

With my prayer and blessing
Fr. Paul, Rector and Parish Priest

Worship at Ufford & Melton

Everyone is welcome at all Services

APRIL

Sun 6th Passion Sunday
08.00 am Holy Communion BCP, Melton
10.00 am Parish Eucharist, Ufford
10.00 am Morning Worship, Melton

Sun 13th Palm Sunday
10.00 am Benefice Sung Eucharist, Procession, Ufford

HOLY WEEK
Monday 14th 6 pm Night Prayer, Melton
Tuesday 15th 6 pm Said Eucharist, Ufford
Wednesday 16th 10.00am Said Eucharist, Melton
Maundy Thursday 17th 7 pm Sung Eucharist, Melton

Good Friday 18th
10.00am Stations of the Cross, Ufford followed by hot-cross buns.

Holy Saturday 19th
7 pm Service of Light with Blessing of Easter Fire and First Eucharist of Easter followed by fizz and chocolates, at Ufford

Sun 20th Easter Day
08.00 am Holy Communion BCP at Melton
10.00 am Parish Sung Eucharist at Ufford
10.00 am Parish Sung Eucharist at Melton

Sun 27th Easter 2
08.00 am Holy Communion BCP at Ufford
10.00 am Parish Sung Eucharist at Melton

LIVE CHURCH CALENDAR

www.uffordchurch.org

Food Bank donations welcome to the 'Little Pantry 'at St Andrew's Church, Melton with a collection Box in Ufford Church porch.

If you would like to have a lily in memory of a loved one included in Church Flower Easter Flower arrangements, please contact Rosemary Knight 07990 578162.
The cost is £5; please put the money in a sealed envelope with your name and the name of the loved one on the outside and leave in the box at the back of St. Mary's Church

Online prayer resources:

https://pray-as-you-go.org/home/
https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer

BREAKING NEWS

PUNCH Selling Out to Big Business

As we were going to press, news reached us that the PUNCH Committee has agreed to a takeover offer for the title from a yet-unnamed private equity group. According to documents we have seen, PUNCH will be merged with the Melton Messenger, Martlesham Flyer, Rendlesham Recorder and Orford Organ to create a 'synergistic and sustainable' business primarily based in Ipswich with villagers providing 'locally-tailored content'.

It is understood that Committee members will each receive a four-figure sum (maybe five) as 'just recompense' for their years of endless voluntary work.

Ultimately there will be a move from print distribution to online platforms such as X (aka Twitter) and TikTok. In the interim local readers will still receive the print edition free if they signify their assent to new terms by accepting the free cookie which will be distributed in a brown paper bag along with the next issue. Consumption of the cookie will permit PUNCH agents to 'customise your user experience, perform analytics and deliver personalised advertising' by rummaging through the contents of your wheelie bins and recording any product packaging, till receipts or personal correspondence they can find.

Ronald Stump, the newly appointed chair of the PUNCH, said 'This is probably the biggest deal ever done in Efford. I know all about big deals, I do a lot of them, more than anybody in Suffolk, probably all of East Anglia, if not the world. It's probably the best executive decision I've ever made, ever. The people of Efford will love this; nobody has ever done so much for them. It will make the PAUNCH Great Again.'

The takeover terms will be finalised the morning of April 1st.

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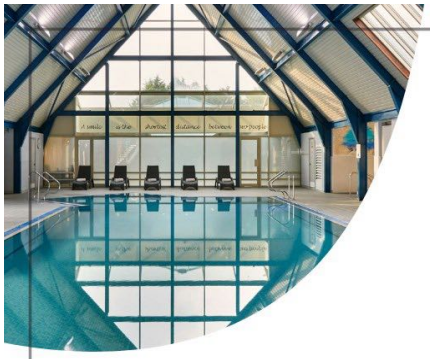

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